

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7235

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 0252

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ETRD ES

SUBJ: US TRADE ACT - MEETING OF FOUR CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

REF: A. SAN SALVADOR 0216; B. SAN SALVADOR 0236

1. DURING CHARGE'S JANUARY 20 APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT MOLINA, REPORTED REFTEL B, THE PRESIDENT RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE U.S. TRADE BILL AND THE ATTENTION IT RECEIVED DURING THE JANUARY 18 MEETING OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS IN GUATEMALA. (IN PREFACE TO HIS REMARKS HE SAID THE MEETING ORIGINATED WITH A CALL FROM GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT LAGERAUD JANUARY 15, SUGGESTING THE NEED TO GET TOGETHER TO DISCUSS A RESPONSE TO VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ' LETTER. THE GUATEMALAN NAVY DAY DETERMINED THE DATE AND PLACE AND THE BREADTH OF THE MEETING GREW WITH SUBSEQUENT CALLS TO PRESIDENTS LOPEZ AND SOMOZA. PRESIDENT MOLINA SAID THAT AFTER SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO REACH PRESIDENT ODUBER, PRESIDENT LAGERAUD DID SPEAK WITH THE COSTA RICAN VICE PRESIDENT WHO ULTIMATELY SAID ODUBER COULD NOT BREAK AWAY FOR THE JANUARY 18 MEETING. SO THERE WAS NO INTENTION OF EXCLUDING ODUBER.) PRESIDENT MOLINA SAID THE PRESIDENTS HAD FRANK, CONFIDENTIAL

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REALISTIC AND THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF THE TRADE ACT AND HOW IT

COULD AFFECT THEM AND VENEZUELA, DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY. HE SAID PRESIDENT SOMOZA WAS THE BEST INFORMED ON THE ACT AND TOOK THE LEAD IN PROVIDING USEFUL CLARIFICATION OF ITS VARIOUS PROVISOS. THE VARIOUS COMMUNICATIONS WHICH WE HAD PASSED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO THE PRESIDENT AND HE EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR THE GOOD BACKGROUND THEY PROVIDED HIM.

2. PRESIDENT MOLINA SAID THE DISCUSSION DISCLOSED A UNANIMOUS RECOGNITION OF THE ADVANTAGES THE TRADE ACT OFFERED CENTRAL AMERICA AND THEIR DESIRE TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THESE BENEFITS. BECAUSE OF THEIR BASIC IDENTIFICATION WITH SISTER LATIN AMERICAN REPUBLICS AND THE NEW SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH VENEZUELA, THEY ALSO AGREED TO TAKE NOTE OF, AS IS REFLECTED IN THE COMMUNIQUE, THE ACT'S DISCRIMINATORY CLAUSES THAT MIGHT BE PREJUDICIAL TO OTHER COUNTRIES. THEY DECIDED THAT THE BEST WAY TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN WAS THROUGH DIALOGUE IN WHATEVER FORUM WAS AVAILABLE, WHETHER THE OAS, OR AT INFORMAL MEETINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTERS TO CARRY ON THE NEW DIALOGUE. THEY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR MAINTAINING INTER-AMERICAN SOLIDARITY IN CONSIDERING THIS ISSUE RATHER THAN TREATING IT AS A LATIN AMERICAN-U.S. CONFRONTATION. PRESIDENT MOLINA SAID THAT IN RETROSPECT, PRESIDENT ODUBER'S ABSENCE WAS PROBABLY OPPORTUNE, GIVEN ODUBER'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO VENEZUELA.

3. THE PRESIDENTS AGREED TO RESPOND TO PRESIDENT PEREZ' LETTER INDIVIDUALLY BUT WITH SIMILAR LANGUAGE INCORPORATING THE CONCEPTS OF THEIR JOINT DECLARATION. IN THE MEANTIME, PRESIDENT MOLINA INSTRUCTED HIS DELEGATE TO THE OAS MEETING JANUARY 20 TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONSTRUCTIVE, POSTIVE NON-POLEMICAL, NON-CONFRONTATIONAL WAY.

4. WHILE PRESIDENT MOLINA DID NOT GO INTO WHEN AND HOW HE WOULD RESPOND TO OUR REQUEST FOR AN OFFICIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE IN TITLE V AND THE APPROPRIATE ASSURANCES, WE ASSUME THAT, UNLESS OTHERWISE BOUND BY OAS RESOLUTIONS, THE GOES WILL FEEL FREE TO ACT ON THESE REQUIREMENTS SHORTLY AFTER THE OAS PERMANENT COUNCIL MEETING.
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